



Why is it that something as simple as voting in America has become more – not less – difficult for so many? The answer: Stricter voting laws that actively try to disenfranchise certain voting populations in the United States.

Over the last year, we have seen a wave of state legislatures enacting voter ID laws, framed as efforts to combat voter fraud. The only fraud, however, is the claim that such a problem exists at any critical level in the U.S. In fact, there's a greater chance that someone in a crowd will be struck by lightning than commit voter fraud.

In Wisconsin, a state that recently passed a harsh voter suppression law, there was a less than .0002 percent rate of fraud. Texas, another offender, could only find a total of 5 incidents of voter fraud in the 13 million ballots cast between 2008 and 2010. In Colorado, the secretary of state's office suspected that as many as 11,000 noncitizens were registered to vote, but upon investigation found that only 141 noncitizens were registered. Nationally, voter fraud is .0007 percent.

In Florida, where an attempted voter purge of almost 200,000 names, including military veterans with service in Afghanistan and Iraq, revealed only a single illegal voter. Ohio Secretary of State Jon Husted was called out and forced to back down after trying to limit early voting hours in Democratic counties, while expanding them in Republican counties. Nationally, voter intimidation at polling stations has been reinvigorated through organizations like True the Vote, funded in part by the Koch brothers.

Millions of poor, elderly, minority, and student voters across the country don't have passports or driver's licenses; some don't even have birth certificates. Hundreds of thousands who

sometimes travel long distances and pay money, or miss work to stand in line, may face the modern version of a poll tax.

That is unconscionable.

Solution

Congressman Blumenauer got started in politics spearheading the effort to lower the voting age in Oregon and at the national level. While eighteen year-olds are now eligible to vote, there is still a great deal of work to be done to ensure that all eligible voters are able to vote.

It is important to pry partisan fingers off the controls of the election process and replace it with a vote-by-mail system – a common-sense solution that is highly effective, reduces opportunities for cheating and mistakes, actually costs less, and provides more reliable results. Voters in Oregon have proved that the vote-by-mail process is no longer an experiment, but a better way.

Oregon voters are given almost four hundred hours to examine the issues and return the ballot either by mail or in person. Gaming voting machines, closing the precinct early, long lines, running out of ballots in precincts that are likely to vote a certain way – all of these are removed from the equation.

Congress should be doing as much as possible to encourage and facilitate participation in the democratic process. With such an important election just over a month away, it is vital that everyone's voices are heard. Congressman Blumenauer recently joined his colleagues in sending a letter to college and university presidents encouraging their institutions to take a more active role in educating students in the federal electoral process. He has also asked Attorney General Eric Holder to investigate the voter suppression laws appearing around the country, and has cosponsored H.R. 5799, the Voter Empowerment Act of 2012 which, in addition to making same day voter registration national policy, would protect the franchise and strengthen access for all.

Congressman Blumenauer is working hard in Congress to champion the Oregon solution of vote by mail to make the process simpler, more reliable and, most importantly, fairer for everyone.

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